



**U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development**

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TO: HUD Partners, Clients and Customers

FROM: Dan Stotmeister, Director, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, SIES

SUBJECT: Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST

We are pleased to advise you that the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) has contracted with Bearing Point, Inc. to provide HUD staff and HUD's partners (especially builders, developers, architects, and advocates) with training and technical resources regarding the design and construction requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST: FHEO recently implemented Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST (FIRST) as a training and technical guidance program designed to promote compliance with the design and construction requirements of the Fair Housing Act. The program name, Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST, has dual significance. FIRST describes the services available under the program—**F**air Housing **I**nstruction, **R**esources, **S**upport and **T**echnical guidance. It also conveys the importance of planning for compliance with the accessibility requirements first—before design and construction begin.

Technical Guidance: Under this contract, the Design and Construction Resource Center (DCRC) administers a toll free information line (1-888-341-7781 Voice/TTY), and a website (www.fairhousing.org). The website contains detailed information about the training program and a schedule of upcoming trainings, as well as a variety of links and resources related to the design and construction requirements. The website also includes frequently asked questions and answers about interpretations of the design and construction requirements.

The DCRC responds to all telephone calls and inquiries submitted via the website. The BearingPoint team of specialists and HUD FHEO provide assistance to the DCRC in answering novel and complex inquiries.

Training Curriculum: FIRST includes a comprehensive training curriculum, which is currently being presented in 24 trainings throughout the United States. The curriculum consists of the following nine modules that can be presented individually or in any combination:

- Fair Housing Act Accessibility Requirements Overview (short and long versions)
- Disability Rights Laws
- Fair Housing Act Enforcement
- Strategies for Compliant Kitchens

- Strategies for Compliant Bathrooms
- Common Design and Construction Violations and Solutions
- Accessible Routes
- Accessible Public and Common-Use Areas

These training modules are directed primarily toward industry audiences, but also designed to be useful for all audiences. The curriculum has already been presented to national and regional industry conferences, such as the National Association of Home Builders' International Builders Show and the National Multi Housing Council Annual Conference, as well as to state fair housing lawyers. Local American Institute of Architects (AIA), building industry, fair housing, and enforcement organizations are hosting additional training sessions.

Promoting utilization of these resources: There are several ways this program supports compliance with the Fair Housing Act's design and construction requirements.

1. People with design and construction questions can get answers at www.fairhousingfirst.org and 1-888- 341-7781 (Voice/TTY)

Questions regarding the design and construction requirements can be entered at the website or by calling DCRC where specially trained experts will provide consistent guidance. Additionally, the questions and responses will be captured so that HUD ensures consistent responses and also learns what questions are frequently asked. We encourage you to use this toll-free number and the website.

2. Disseminate FIRST marketing materials at meetings, conferences, and other relevant venues

We have developed two key marketing tools that can be used to promote both compliance with the Fair Housing Act and the FIRST Program:

- *FIRST Poster Brochure* – this tri-fold opens to a mini-poster describing each of the seven design and construction requirements, as well as listing the FIRST website address and information line. This brochure is for general audiences to promote compliance and encourage application of design and construction principles.
- *FIRST Program Brochure* – this brochure describes the FIRST program in detail, including a description of each module of the training curriculum and the technical guidance program. This piece is appropriate for audiences who might be interested in hosting a FIRST training session.

In order to receive copies of these materials, please contact BearingPoint at mcotter@bearingpoint.net.

3. Potential training host organizations are directed to contact BearingPoint

If you represent or know of a group who has a need for training or may be interested in hosting a training session, please contact or direct them to mcotter@bearingpoint.net. Upon receiving such information, BearingPoint will coordinate with HUD FHEO to determine whether a training session can be scheduled.

If you have any questions about this program, please contact me at (414) 297-3214 ext. 8300 or Sandra Rubin, ext. 8301. Thank you for your assistance in promoting awareness of both Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST and the Fair Housing Act's design and construction requirements.